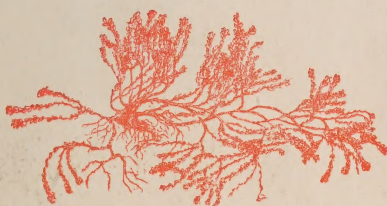


AN
ISLAND PLANT

A Pantucket Story



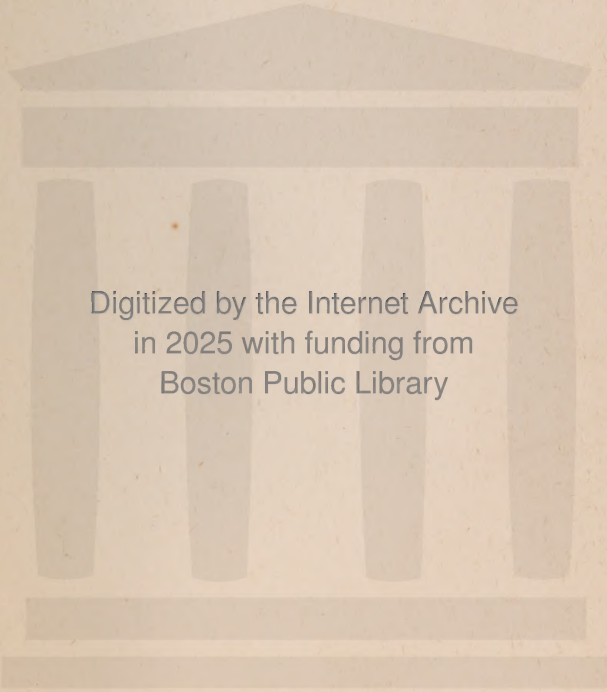
MARY CATHERINE LEE

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AN ISLAND PLANT

A Nantucket Story

BY

MARY CATHERINE LEE

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
SARA WINTHROP
SMITH*

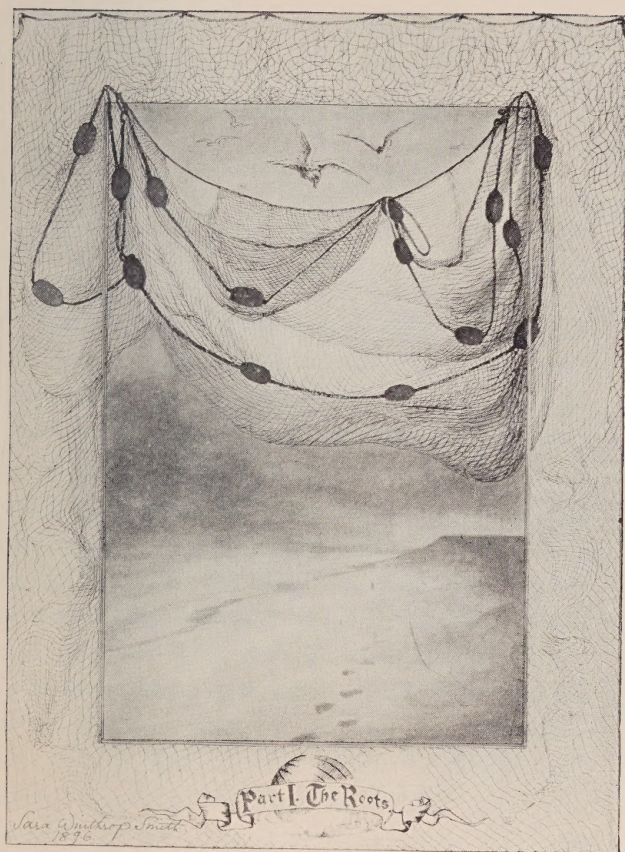


NANTUCKET
Goldenrod Literary and Debating Society
1896

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Sara Whitthrop Smith
1896

Part I. The Roots

AN ISLAND PLANT.

I.

THE ROOTS.

WHEN Nantucket town was called Sherburne, the houses of the first settlement at Maddekset were left isolated upon the western end of the island. There they stood staring, with the chagrined expression of things conscious of having been left; toned at length into apparent resignation and serenity by a soft washing-in of gray; and brought finally to complete agreement with their setting of sea and sand by being propped up here and eked out there with the remnants of wrecks.

Most isolated, most lonely of all these was the abode of Phebe Nichols; yet more apart than the house itself was the soul within it. Daniel and Eunice Nichols, following the lead of other persecuted Quakers, had come to Nantucket, seeking peace and pursuing it. There they brought Phebe, their sole offspring, the child of their middle life, to womanhood, and left her for the eternal peace;

left her to evolve such a case as she might from the conditions of more than a century ago, on the Maddekot plains.

Though she knew nothing of sacraments, there was, in truth, something of the sacredness and solemnity of a sacrament in those mute observances by which Phebe took up her inheritance, — accepted her lonesomeness with her patrimony. Lonesomeness, indeed, was by far the more considerable portion; for, beside their Bible, “a few strong instincts and a few plain rules,” Daniel and Eunice had brought hardly more than their pewter mugs and platters from the mainland. On the sands and poverty grass of Nantucket, where their humility of desire agreed with nature’s grudging moods, they had gathered together only such appointments as would protect and support their lives of duty, and, departing, had left these concretions of their virtues to bind Phebe to a hal-
lowed spot.

In the rectitude and sincerity of her cherished furniture her father still expressed himself, for it was the work of his own hands. Her neat, sweet bedding, her mats of husks, and even her brooms of beach grass were the results of her mother’s patient industry; and in a pieced “comforter” and a braided woolen mat Phebe treasured the

relinquished garments of both her parents. There was hardly a suggestion of beauty in all her precious store, yet Phebe feared there was too much splendor of adornment in some baskets of stained withes, and woven ribbons of thinly-split soft wood, which she herself had achieved by barter with the Indians.

The indefinite matter of happiness can hardly be entered upon an inventory of Phebe's possessions, but there was something akin to it in her unconsciousness of the tediousness and poverty of her life. She was unaware, for example, that she lacked diversion, for she had never heard of the singular cases of persons who expected to be diverted. To her understanding, the daughter of Herodias pleased Herod by the skillful execution of some rarely difficult work.

On sunny days, Phebe knew the hour by the marks her father had made on the window-sill; on cloudy days, she guessed it; and the variations of dividing her monotony into portions, or accepting it entire, were her vicissitudes. She could not know that she needed a change when, after a week of storm, the sun came out, and she saw that it was twelve o'clock!

Now and then some matron of Sherburne gave her spinning and weaving or quilting to do; in

spring she gathered herbs, in summer berries, to take to town with her more regular merchandise of eggs and chickens; but there were times when all her resources failed to consume the many hours of the long days of her still young life. When the great storms had come; when her linen and worsted were spun and woven and fashioned into sheaths for her body; when her stockings were knitted, her fish dried, her pork pickled, the autumn's little harvest and her medicinal herbs gathered in; when she had fed herself and her hens, and so arranged matters that life would continue to go on, Phebe would often have sat idle, with folded hands, but that she remembered the final account she must give for every moment during which she sat gazing dreamily into the fire.

Her only means of devoting these remnants of time to duty was that of spelling a few paragraphs in the old sheepskin-covered Bible, which had been a parting gift to her grandfather from one of the martyrs to their common opinions, in those bitter days when the Quakers were sorely hated in Plymouth colony. Because these words were slowly spelled and separately considered, they were well remembered. Sometimes they vaguely pleased, sometimes they puzzled and alarmed, the girl; for the Friends left these matters to be inter-

preted by the Spirit, and poor Phebe, waiting in silence for the voice of the Spirit, perceived only the literal word. It is true that she might have given her thought to such portions of it as were plain and comforting. Ah, it is precisely what might have been, and was not, which is mournfully conspicuous in the lot of Phebe Nichols. In the multiplicity of her needs, she needed somebody to tell her what she needed; but everybody's duty was systematically planned and performed on the island of Nantucket, without reference to Phebe Nichols or her needs.

Clearly, Phebe was a woman without a vocation; but she had had her little aspiration. She had timidly dreamed it would be happiness to be loved of the herb-doctor's youngest son. But such a thought in regard to her had perhaps never occurred to the herb-doctor's son, whose destiny was otherwise fixed; so that eventually this one dream of the little wild-eyed Quakeress was raised to the height of sacred experience by the magical power of three words. These words were "lost at sea."

Other sons of Nantucket came from time to time wooing Phebe: one from town, one from the North Shore, and one from the Head of the Plains. But that which had been lost in the sea, the unattainable, made it impossible to satisfy those rudi-

ments of poetic imagination which appear to have been a rather useless and inconvenient adjunct to Phebe's mind ; so the young men from town, from the North Shore, and from the Head of the Plains went their ways, and Phebe lived on alone.

That is, to use a common form of speech ; but who does live alone ? " This body in which we journey across the isthmus between the two oceans," says Dr. Holmes, " is not a private carriage, but an omnibus."

They feel their multiple identity more than others, these solitaires, and so they have a habit of speaking out, called " talking to themselves." To Phebe Nichols this esoteric comradeship was not all. The longer she maintained her apparent solitude, the more populous were her borders. Not only her rigid father and meek, submissive mother seemed more actually there, in their old, sober, silent habitudes, than they were in their unmarked graves, but there were, moreover, less homely and welcome indwellers and visitants. What was it that cried to her out of the night ; what besides the wind ? What stealthy forms were those that came across the plains from the foot of Trot's Hills, or the margin of Long Pond, in the gray of the morning ? What busy feet and whispering voices waked her when the nights were cold and still ?

Strange are the creatures that crowd upon mortals in moral solitude! Unseen and unheard where humanity draws together, how they press upon and startle helpless beings who are alone!

When Phebe sat up to the little round deal table of an evening, with her Bible and her tallow dip, and spelled out those visions of the Apocalypse to which she always turned, it was to add still another element to the mixed assembly which thronged upon her fancy. Her finger moved slowly, often tremulously, from word to word. Her vivid face, reflecting the wavering light, was a rare commentary upon the text. Gradually all things were colored, and just beyond the simple scenery of her world, bounding it closely, like a lurid atmosphere, was the wondrous phantasm of creatures full of eyes and terrible with horns; a beast that made fire to come down upon the earth; awful vials poured out to scorch men; and especially a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, whose tail swept a third part of the stars down upon the earth, who stood ready to devour a child at its birth.

There was no kindly counsel to dispel her confusions and illusions. "Be still, and know that I am God," was the invariable and only answer vouchsafed to perplexity by the Quakers of those

days. But Phebe could not be still. The neighborly visitor from a mile or two away paused, before reaching her threshold, to listen to a voice raised to a clear note of subdued intensity, or dropped to a murmurous undertone; broken into short, incisive phrases, or running smoothly on in an eager stream of words. If the visitor advanced, and, perceiving the leathern latchstring outside, lifted the latch and entered without knocking, in the custom of the time and place, Phebe was found to be quite alone, or with no visible auditor, her hands perhaps outstretched in an attitude of exhortation or pleading; or, it might be, quietly and thoughtfully bunching up her yarrow and motherwort, her archangel and "sparemint," for drying; or simply standing upon the hearthstone, erect and slim, giving a turn to her bit of pork that hung roasting before the fire, and speaking or responding as in friendly conversation, so low that one could plainly hear the boiling of the sap in the burning logs. Or, perchance, she would be stooping to put her paste of salted meal and water into the baking-kettle, and heaping upon the kettle's lid the live coals that gave a flush to her white cheek, and intensified the startled look which she turned upon the incomer.

But sometimes those who paused to listen

to the earnest voice looked suspiciously upon the desolate dwelling, which stood sidewise, in an evasive, ungracious attitude, with its thin coil of smoke writhing away like a mystical kind of serpent, — an unblest-looking house, with no tree, no flower in its company, but only the wind-bitten, reluctant herbage of the desert to save the naked poverty of the sands from exposure. They looked suspiciously, and turned away. The neighborly visits ceased, and strange things began to be whispered of Phebe and her invisible communicants.

That, however, was Nantucket, not Salem; the eighteenth, not the seventeenth century; so, instead of hanging or burning Phebe, they left her to the “daily dying” prescribed by the Quaker discipline.

Some relief there was from this condition of things. There were the First Day and Fifth Day meetings, when Phebe sat among the living, looked upon human faces, and listened to human voices. There, Phebe was simply herself to the simple meeting-folk. Nothing in her life was so sweet as the pressure of those warm, friendly hands, and the “How ’s thee do, Phebe?” — nothing so comfortable to look at as the clustered bonnets nodding at each other in the doorway of

the little meeting-house after meeting, unless the appearance of those same bonnets within her own walls, which occasionally happened; for the Friends are conscientious in their attendance upon the needs of their lonely and sick and poor; yet it is not given to them — it is not given to human insight — to know all the needs of the simplest mortal life. With them, to whom silence and lonesomeness of spirit were duties, there seemed nothing calling for relief in those conditions clearly arranged by the divine will.

But there were other occasions of contact with her fellow beings less welcome than those visits of the friendly nodding bonnets. These came of the necessity of carrying her herbs and berries, her chickens and eggs, to town, and bringing back the small requirements of her incomprehensible life; for life is a premise that must be supported to some kind of a conclusion.

Phebe shrank like a young doe from entering the precincts of man; for man himself is so fearless, and looks under a white sunbonnet, or even a brown Quaker bonnet, with such freedom. The old men thought of their lost youth, at the sight of her comely, intense face and slender, swaying form; the young men looked at her tender, un-kissed lips with longing — lips that moved with a

sensitive quiver under that ordeal of eyes. Even the involuntary glance that roved beyond the steel-yards, when Josiah Coffin weighed her out two pounds of dark brown sugar, and the regard he fixed upon her, instead of the two shillings she laid on the molasses barrel or the sixpence he returned to her shrinking palm, were painful experiences to Phebe. Her light feet moved quickly as she retreated up the crooked street, and out upon the paths that led to her lair on the Maddeket plains.

It was in one of these retreats that fate followed and fixed new conditions for her. She was moving with the smooth buoyancy of slender, unfettered wild creatures, and swaying like a young palm-tree in the wind. Her face, which bore the mark of solitary living in its intensified sensibility, was bent downward; her tawny eyelids drooped; their heavy lashes hid the dark line of weariness beneath them; her long fingers, clasping one another upon the handle of her basket, made sudden convulsive starts without unclasping; her thin, sweetly curved lips moved incessantly, or trembled with the oncoming tide of words.

"It may be, for so it hath been from the beginning," she was saying; and her language had a touch of nobleness which she had caught from the sublime book. "Some he will help, and some he

willeth not to help, as he hath said in his word, — ‘I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.’” And after a pause, with a shuddering moan, “It may be true, what these evil beings whisper to me, — that *I* am of those upon whom he will not have mercy; for why should he have respect unto me?”

The buffeting wind, driving her faster, seemed only to consent with her distracted impulse to hurry away. The bristling heads of everlasting, the rusted yarrow, and the bleached goldenrod of November, that had moved with agitated shivers when she passed on her way to town, were bending headlong, with frantic strain, south and westward, and straightening themselves for more determined plunges, like enchanted sprites vainly struggling to break the spell which held them rooted. The commotion in the air blended with Phebe’s own disturbance, and was lost to her. She neither heard nor saw with her physical senses, until at length, pausing abruptly, her thin nostrils dilated with deep breathing, her dark eyes kindling like smouldering embers in a sudden blast, she turned as if to face some invisible pursuer, her hands outstretched to appeal once more.

But no words came. Phebe stood dumb before the strange appearance of things. There was a

diffusion of dull redness, which, having its source in the heavens, immersed the plain and the low hillsides, changing the mournful browns and withered drabs of the hitherto murky, monotoned scene to a solemn pageant of color under smothered light.

To a mind perpetually overwrought and verging closely upon madness, which saw sinister and mysterious appearances in the commonest things, that sudden angry flush was not without its portent. There were strange meanings always, to Phebe, on sea and sky; the very ground beneath her was solid and secure only by some temporary armistice with the powers of evil. It was as if she had discovered a hidden and horrible significance in things, and, daring not to reveal it, bore the awful weight in her single, isolated soul.

She pushed on, however, panting and palpitating, until she reached the height above and beyond Maxey's Pond, — the topmost point of the island, probably, from which the eye can sweep the almost unbroken horizon, follow the island's outlines, and travel far over its surrounding waters. There she recoiled with a low cry from the majesty of the spectacle which burst upon her. Across the sky, from south to north and down to the western sea, stupendous sweeps of angry red

trailed from limit to limit of the horizon zone ; and the sea was a field of blood, bounded by a far-away outer gloom, — a purple gloom, as of the death coincident with fields of blood. It was no common gorgeousness of sunset, but a monstrous phenomenon, to be remembered during a lifetime, which neither painting nor language can portray.

The girl stood paralyzed, gazing upon the solemn splendor, her scant garments pressed and moulded upon her long, slight limbs by the wind, her bonnet blown back, the dark locks lifted from her brow, enhancing its breadth and pallor. Such an exposed and defenseless figure, so raised and sharply vignettèd upon the awful sky, could not have been overlooked by the maleficent spirits of the air.

In Phebe's distorted mind, this appearance of sea and sky had its indubitable explanation. It was the second advent of the red dragon ; a new revelation of the "great mountain burning with fire," which "was cast into the sea ; and the third part of the sea became blood ; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died ; and the third part of the ships were destroyed." She made no doubt that the invincible monster was there, wallowing in the waters, which he suffused with his color, and that those

mighty sweeps of sullen red were the result of those same lashings which had swept the stars from the sky. She heard, indeed, his horrible roar, sounding and resounding over land and sea, and, drowned in awe and dismay, sank down upon the field moss, and covered her head with her cloak.

Time marked by suffocating heart-throbs has an exaggerated standard of computation, and Phebe awaited the dubious possibilities during long, nameless periods, soul and body bowed together in mutual sufferance. She dreaded with a capacity which admits no comparison with the cause of her dread, though that might well have overwhelmed the coolest philosopher with awe. But at length, emboldened or numbed to indifference by the delay of doom, she lifted her piteous face. Behold, the red dragon was innocently retiring. Far down the western slope of the heavens, and on the utmost border of the visible sea, his latter portion was sliding away, — dropping over the confines of the earth back into the nether pit again, — and the stain of his touch was already being wiped out of the sky.

Completely down upon the sparsely covered sand, prostrate, Phebe drooped then, like a bird overwearyed by too great a flight, and there were

hard, dry sobs among the sounds flung along by the gale. With all else, in the weakness of the moment, the desolation of her separated life presented itself boldly to her recognition, like a skeleton unmasking.

It is not the fact of lonesomeness, but the realization of it, which is appalling. This sudden perception came to Phebe, as she lay cold, forlorn, strengthless and defenseless, watching the home lights shine out here and there in the dusk of the plain. They seemed to her as the lights on shore to one who perishes at sea. She pressed in fancy, eager and trembling, to firesides where men and women were allied, and so, fearless; where one soul was born of another, and eye met eye with the satisfaction and assurance of kinship. She thought, with a new longing, of that sweet community of human interests which makes families and homes.

But in answer to that pain of lonesomeness and longing there followed the taunting recollection of one and another and another who would have placed her in the bosom of a home like those which bestarred the plain. She remembered Simeon Coleman, the farrier's son, who had such a tender heart. She thought of Ira Paddock, with the laughing blue eyes, who battled with whales, and would have fought the red dragon for

her sake ; and of the grave and manly young farmer and miller, Philip Foulger. He was wise. He owned five books, and had read them all. He would have led her safely. That was his light in the farmhouse below ; but it was another woman who sat by it, offering Philip his steaming tea, or laying his baby in its cradle.

Her empty home at Maddekett — empty save for those invisible, unearthly intruders — became suddenly a place of dread to her, as she rose at last, feebly, to go to it in the deepening dusk. To rest there upon the hillside, in sight of warm human homes, seemed better. She turned towards Maddekett, and, wavering, returned to the home lights. Shivering, tossed and driven, she sank upon the mossy turf again, and gazed upon the lost Eden, — an exile, self-betrayed and self-banished, — her lips pressing each other closer and closer in the generation of resolve, as the remorseful delusion dawned upon her that, since hitherto she had not accepted her allotment of mercy, she was of those to whom mercy was denied.

“But,” she murmured, in the humble, tremulous tone of a punished child promising obedience, “I would not say nay again. I was not clear ; but now I see it was for me to take what the Lord sent me. I will not say nay again, whoever is sent.”

It was, to her, a vow. She repeated it, — “I will not say nay again,” — a vow as irrevocable to her as Jephthah’s vow to him ; for she was a Quaker maiden of more than a hundred years ago, with a conscience that laid a measure to every thought and word.

The wind storm was increasing. It held its breath to press more cruelly upon her. She was driven down under the lee of the hill for shelter. In a quiet hollow she paused to rest, and was again startled by a sea bird, blowing across the broad neck of the island, which dropped into this refuge, too, and flapped away before the wind again with sharp, anxious cries.

Across the plain came a human cry ; and presently a tall white object revealed itself, approaching slowly. It wavered, sank, and disappeared. This was no mystery to Phebe. It was, indeed, a familiar sight to everybody on the island, and Phebe welcomed it.

“ There comes James Newbegin,” she said. “ I’ll ask him to take me home.”

The white object was the sail with which James rigged his two-wheeled cart when voyaging across the island, navigating the land with as much attention to the wind as if his cart had been a schooner ; luffing and keeping off, jibing and tacking and



reefing, as he changed his course. The severity of the wind obliged him to take in sail altogether, and scud under bare poles, if such a hyperbolical verb may be made to refer to the remaining motor power, an old and self-willed animal, over which James flourished a harmless whip with great appearance of violent intent, shouting, "Come, come, come! Dum thee! I'll hit thee!" But the good-natured, simple fellow had, in fact, never struck a blow upon anything in his life, unless we except the useful blows of his hammer and hatchet. The sight of him was a solace to Phebe. He never gazed at her with the offensive eagerness of the younger men, but simply as he looked at all things, with his amiably foolish smile. "Only James Newbegin" was what she thought; yet it was a human being, whom she dreaded as little as if he had been a friendly old woman, and it would seem more cheerful and comfortable to go home in his company.

Still trembling and tottering, still shuddering from the nearness of the awful possibilities she had escaped, she went on to meet him, for fear he should leave her and veer off into some farther one of the straggling tracks that rutted the plains in every direction which the varying purposes or caprices of the islanders had determined. He saw her com-

ing, and Phebe could hear the peculiar laugh with which he celebrated an agreeable impression. It came to her with the roar of the wind, and she tasted the salt which the wind had also brought to her crystallized upon her lips, and thought of the tears of her childhood.

That laugh of James's, one short note with a downward inflection, — "Huh! huh!" — to the unaccustomed sense needed the accompaniment of his expanded visage, to be understood as a laugh. It sounded strange and incongruous, like the ill-timed entrance of a buffo into an act of tragedy; and following it, a piping, clownish voice called, "Whoy, Tim'thy! Why, Phebe, thee ain't goin' to town to-night, em thee?"

"I was going home, and turned back to ask thee to let me ride with thee, James, if thee 's going over to Maddeket," answered Phebe.

"Certain, certain. Give me thy basket. Now hop in. Heave-yo! Up she comes! There, now, set thee down here behind the canvas, out o' the wind. Hei-gh, Tim'thy!"

Phebe crept in behind the shelter of the sail, and resigned herself thankfully to the floor of the jerking cart. With such power of wishing as remained, she wished to forget the awful hour upon the hill-top, yet almost as much longed to ease her soul of

its burden by speaking out to some partaker with her in the terrors and dangers of mortality — and immortality.

Two singular beings they were: that intense, half-mad young creature,—a soul of pent-up flame,—and the ruddy, middle-aged simpleton, white-eyed, comfortable, invertebrate, the resources of whose nature were invested in inane kindness and unreasoning impulse,—just the germ of a soul, a mere register of dim sensations.

“Cur’ous sky, wa’n’t it, Phebe?” drawled the shrill harlequin voice,”—“like stewed blackberries; black, thee knows, with red juice over ’em. Huh! I wished it *was* stewed blackberry, an’ I could reach it.”

Phebe shuddered. “Thee don’t understand,” she murmured, her voice deep with the awe of her own stupendous conception.

“No, I dun know’s I do, Phebe. I don’t und’stand what ’t *is* I don’t und’stand.”

“Thee’s read in the word of God, James” —

“Stop a bit! I can’t read.”

Then Phebe, with eyes solemnly closed, uttered her first annunciation to human ears. She used her opportunity to pour out all the stored-up results of her strange conceptions and lonely imaginings, and James listened to the overwhelming recital, half aroused, half stunned.

“Thee don’t say so, Phebe! I wan’ ter know!” he reiterated, in a confusion of childish interest and dismay; and when Phebe had finished, and sat trembling with the intense agitation of that unique abandon, and the effect upon herself of her own graphic delineations, — of *seeing* that she had a hearer, and of hearing the mystical words of the Apocalypse (which she quoted with slow impressiveness, even in her excitement) taken up and borne grandly on by the bold wind, — he turned upon her a look of purblind wonder mixed with dull but kindly pity. “I’m sorry for thee, Phebe,” he said. “I be, truly. Ain’t it lunsome for thee, livin’ alone out there to Maddeket? It comes to me to ask thee to marry me, an’ come” —

“*No — no — don’t, don’t* ask it, James!” Phebe interrupted, with a repressed shriek, the very repression of Quaker habit giving strength to the passion of her prayer.

“Wait a bit, wait a bit,” James responded, with unruffled moderation. “It’s give’ me to ask it, an’ I must foller the leadin’. Thee ain’t forced to say yes, if thee ain’t clear about it, but thee ain’t right to hender the leadin’. Will thee” —

“*Don’t* say it! James, James Newbegin, *don’t* thee ask me that!”

With this outcry, Phebe rose upon her knees,

her outspread, outstretched palms upraised as if to defend herself.

“There, there; thee keep quiet, Phebe,” said James, with stolid fixity of purpose. “I’m a-goin’ to foller the leadin’, an’ then thee can say no as soon as thee likes. Will thee stand up in meetin’ with me” —

“James Newbegin, I tell thee don’t thee *dare* to ask me that!”

“Will thee stand up in meetin’ with me next Fifth Day, an’ marry me, Phebe? There! I’ve said it, an’ thee’s only to answer no.”

But Phebe answered nothing. The great cry that could not escape her stiffened lips rang through desolate inner chambers, and only died away with years, — “I *am* of those upon whom he will not have mercy!”



II.

THE GREEN BRANCHES.

JUNE brought to Nantucket, in the olden time, a gala day of importance ; in the presumption of some minds, of even more importance than were the great festivals of the vintage and of the gods of which we read. Yet nobody reads of the great shearing-days of Nantucket, when the many thousand sheep of that island were shorn of their fleeces. During all the year previous to and succeeding that event, the flocks roamed at pleasure over the plains, though sometimes at pleasure was at pain ; for when the sparse verdure was cropped close, or the deadly breath of winter was upon it, when the pools were frozen, and the sleet-laden winds pierced to the tender skin under their woolly coats, driven by suffering they swarmed into the town, and degenerated from the pastoral flocks of poesy to beggars and scavengers. Then the goodwives threw their vegetable parings and the refuse of their frugal tables into the streets. This was the winter provision for the sheep. And

timid children, awakening on bitter nights, cried out in terror of strange trappings, as of a stealthy host pressing inward to the house, and of wide-spread gusty breathings in the air; but they listened with a moment's pleased interest and then sank into peace again, when their mothers' voices bade them fear not, for it was only the sheep pressing close under the house walls to keep warm. By June their makeshifts and degradation seemed well over, and they were fit subjects for poetry again; but then came the demand for their fleeces, and the luxury of basking and browsing in the sunshine was interrupted by the washing and making ready for shearing-day.

On the part of the human population, besides the gathering and cleansing of the innumerable flocks, there were the preparations for feasting all the island's inhabitants and hundreds of strangers from the continent. Nantucket faces wore a look of sanguine eagerness tinged with fitting gravity during these momentous preliminaries. High pressure and urgency were in the very atmosphere. While the omnifarious cooking was going forward under the hands of the women, the unwilling victims were collected by the men and boys, and driven to the great Miacomet Pool, where with much struggle and clamor they were thrust in



among the lily-pads, and not only washed, but throttled, stifled, and utterly undone. Then, "in the wattled pen innumerable pressed, head above head," they wondered and dried themselves into creamy whiteness, so that the wave beyond wave of their rounded backs looked like a pond of rich milk.

At length the great day itself arrived. Let us say the shearing-day of 1791. The sheep-pens and shearing-grounds were on the open plain, near the South Shore. By early cockcrow these grounds were covered with tents and awnings, and the soft, fearful creatures gazed through their bars at further strange proceedings of men. The voice of sober excitement, plaintive, apprehensive bleatings, and the astonished cries of wandering shore birds broke with pleasing discord a stillness that never was silence because of the beating sea. It beat softly, and glittered like polished steel under the white dawn. An uncertain sweetness — perhaps of the dewy, trampled sheep-grass — was in the air, and unnamed balminess from over sea.

Before sunrise, the selectmen in a body, in best breeches and swallow-tail coats, with their queue-ribbons fresh and their shoe-buckles and knee-buckles polished till they shone like the moon, or, here and there, in the straight, well-brushed garb

of a Quaker, moved imposingly upon the scene. They were the judges in the division of the fleece, and their decision settled any doubt as to the ownership of the sheep whose marks had been defaced or washed out. As they moved about slowly, turning from side to side with an amiable "How em you?" or "How's thee do?" it was felt that one of the great functions of the occasion had begun to operate.

Following close upon them, the long serpentine procession of the islanders and their guests came writhing out of town and over the commons, lifting a section into view on the hummocks, dropping a portion of itself into the hollows, and at last thrusting its head upon the shearing-ground, where it disintegrated into high creaking calashes and Nantucket's own two-wheeled carts that ride lightly on the sandy deep. Women in sunbonnets and pug-bonnets sat back to back in them on stiff chairs, behind the seat where the men were mounted; or men with large families walked patiently beside the horses, and prim children, on crickets, were miraculously wedged into imperceptible chinks, or hanging on to the tails of the carts. Down they came, with much bustle, but sedately, upon the common, and after them the tucked-away sails upon which the sheep were to be

sheared, and the baskets, buckets, bottles, bags, and jugs containing the bounteous good things for the shearing-dinner. It is said that, with some, the savings of a whole year were liberally and anxiously appropriated to the appointments of tents, provisions, and camp equipage. Each family reared its own tent and provided its own board, and never were people more distinctly in family than at this general muster. Still, linked together by common interests, and the sympathetic tie that binds an islander more closely than a man of the broad world to his neighbor, no matter could be of indifference to one that was of consequence to another, and, as they unpacked their carts side by side, they chatted to and fro with that mixture of *bonhomie* and gentle reserve peculiar to ingenuous, sober, old-time Nantucket.

On this day there was a matter of consequence to chat about besides the shearing. To some it was of even greater moment. The first whaling-ship ever sent round Cape Horn from Nantucket lay outside the bar, about to start on its adventurous voyage. Its officers and crew were chiefly from the men and boys of the island. Hitherto they had only ventured off shore for whales, or upon short voyages of weeks in the Atlantic waters; and because of this proposed plunge of

fathers, sons, husbands, lovers, into the possibilities of two oceans, there were some sorrowful faces upon the shearing-grounds. To all the hazards, known and unknown, of treacherous waters, of man-eaters and incensed whales, there was but one offset in philosophy, to wit, that all the population of a sand-heap could not live from the sands alone, but some must needs live from the sea.

“There’s a good deal to be thought on, *I* consider,” said a gentle-faced, round-shouldered man, when, upon all sides, there sounded the whet, whet, whet, and the click, click, click, of the shears, — “a good deal to be thought on,” he repeated solemnly, after he had succeeded in quieting the sheep between his knees, so that it submitted to the despoiling hand with a meek, surprised look, “and *one* is that rattle-headed captain.”

“Sho!” responded a rosy-cheeked youth, relaxing his own gratuitous clutch upon the passive sheep, and laying a light caressing hand upon the fleeces as they rolled to a pile on the canvas. “They say when he goes aboard ship, he’s as sober and sensible as a parson, and he makes the men bow and scrape to him as if he was a king; but they’d stick their hands into hot fat for him, every day, every one on ’em. He’s a wild un on land, sartain, but it’s th’ land don’t agree with him. The minute he

touches it — p-z-z-z-z! But he 's made master voyages. He 's a lucky fish. Every sort o' good thing runs straight to his maw. Most o' folks likes him. I be one on 'em."

"Humph! I s'po' so!" With this mild sneer, the gentle shearer clipped faster to offset the incapacity of his moderate tongue. "I don't think well o' the son of a rich man reetrogradin' to a sailor," he declared. "High or humble, a man 's bound to stay by his own father."

"Pooh!" retorted the glib apprentice. "If King David hed 'a' stayed close alongside o' his father, the Bible 'u'd 'a' been a 'nough sight smaller book 'n 't is. There wa'n't nothin' else they could do with Cap'n Dudley. They sent him to sea to keep him fenced in. There's too much room to caper in ashore. He took to the sea, an' 't was the makin' on 'im."

"How is 't you've such a long tale to tell, Pillick?"

"I listened, and heered it told."

"Did you hear wheth' or no he 'd come on yet? I expect he 'll bring old Satan along with him."

"What! you did n't see 'im? He was in all parts o' town two minutes after he landed, last night. There ain't a maid this side o' th' North Shore that knows which way she wants to turn this mornin'."

This latter assertion was controverted on the spot. Some of these maids, fresh, wholesome creatures, with the clear Nantucket complexion which the sun seems never to burn, and which in case of freckles makes up for that defect by a more snowy whiteness of brow and neck, and a daintier flush of cheek, — some of these, both knowingly and persistently, turned in one direction, and that exactly away from the important things of the morning and the usually favored swains. Backward, toward the town, the blue, the brown, the gray, and the black eyes steadfastly or shyly turned, under cover of deep bonnets.

The rim of the sun lifted itself out of the sea. The low-domed hillocks rolled upward into golden light, and downward into violet shadow. Farm-house windows blazed. A brig with red-purple sails heaved into sight. All things stood sharply out in the lateral rays, reflecting more light than they would in the flood of noon.

“I see Richard Macy’s old gray horse,” whispered a romantic one in the group of girls. “He’ll come with him, certain.”

“I’ll warrant he’s asleep solid,” responded the realistic one. “He’s up all night, an’ don’t want his breakfast till it’s time to get dinner.”

A third, with keen, all-seeing black eyes, laughed

a bird's trill. "I can't see the old gray horse," she said, "but I see James Newbegin's old gray sail, as plain as the sun."

This announcement was not without its interest, however. They might, at any rate, have a look at some strange creatures, rarely seen except when they came tag-locking on shearing-days; that is, to gather the numerous little locks of wool scattered upon the ground, the refuse ends of the fleece, torn off by the bushes and fences, or by the struggles of the sheep to free themselves from the shearers, or cut off by the shearers, and thrown away as useless, except to some who had time and patience to cleanse and comb and make them into yarn.

Every year James Newbegin brought his three daughters to the shearing to gather their store of tag-locks.

Richard Macy's guest was, for the moment, almost forgotten, in the interest of watching the passengers alight from that extraordinary sail-rigged vehicle. Slowly and quite silently, with noiseless flappings of the canvas, it moved over the sand billows, and silently came to a stop on the edge of the common.

Girls of to-day would say it was a "weird" sight, but those Nantucket girls of 1791 craned their necks and opened their eyes without fitting

comments. The successor of "Tim'thy," with his ram's neck and rickety gait, was much like "Tim'thy" himself, and bore the same name, but the rosy, rotund James had changed to a shrunk flabby old man. His foolish laugh had ceased, and his animal crawled on uncommanded. The reward of those who watched his young daughters was to have an ample survey of their slight figures, in scant, short-waisted gowns of faded hues, as they crept out of the tail of the cart, and clung timidly together, with large bags on their arms, tipping their cavernous sunbonnets a little, this way and that, to peep at the prospect and see which was the safest direction. Thus they gave but quick, short glimpses of a blue eye, a golden lock ; half a brown face, with an eye that peered narrowly from beneath a sweep of dark lashes ; and one full, sudden look at a face with eyes like a startled gazelle, set in creamy whiteness, and tender lips that moved with a nervous quiver under the broad stare of so many bold eyes. The three sunbonnets were quickly pulled far forward, and the backs of them turned to the spectators, while James, turning, jibed his sail, jerked his rope reins, and silently departed townward again.

Nobody moved to offer greeting or to pass the time of day with the young Newbegins. The

daughters of a strange, muttering mother and a foolish father were under a ban by reason of their family eccentricities. The girls to whom they were a gazing stock were recognized to be on an unapproachable plane. There was nothing strange about their families. To have been approached or addressed, however, would have been a terror the more to the shy ones ; so, exclusive and excluded, they stole along the edge of the common, nearer, and still a little nearer to the busy centre, as their courage grew, each with a slight protuberance of the pocket which hung from her waist, under her skirt, revealing that she had brought her dinner, to be eaten not with the coincident spread and gayety, but in some nook where she might hide herself away. Everybody gave the three a passing stare, and let them go on, except the Quakers, who, if they could catch the bashful eyes, gave them kindly nods, or perhaps even a word or two. They were not regarded as objects of pity or charity, but only as strange beings who withdrew themselves, and were welcome to do so.

To the sister with the yellow locks and the one with the sleepy eyes and full under lip, there was much of exciting interest in the great scene before them, and the already plentiful tag-locks lured them out of their shrinking. In creeping after

these, turning hither for scraps in the poverty grass, and thither for treasures in the bayberry bushes, they came almost as steadily into the very heart of things as if they had been bold. What they saw that day would become the stirring recollections of a lifetime. The last shearing-day furnished them with an unfading memory. Somebody had come over from Cape Cod with a fiddle! They had never seen or heard the like before. They wondered if the little fretted thing, with a shrill human cry, would come again.

They looked curiously, with parted lips and craving palates, at the tempting commodities under the booths, where, outspread in tantalizing array, were cakes of flour mingled with ginger and treacle, and printed in herring-bone lines by an ivory wheel called a "jagging knife;" cakes stuffed with raisins and covered with crusts of sugar; creamy shells of flour from which gushed luscious red cranberry juice, sweet with an inciting whet of sour; wonderful home-made sweets, and nuts and golden fruit from foreign lands; water sweetened with sugar and flavored with lemons; and pleasant beverages unknown and unknowable to those soft red lips that opened in sighing desire of them, though the smallest and poorest boys had pence and ha'pence that day to lavish upon any luxury they chose.

“Look thee, Mary, what is ’t, I wonder, that bubbles up like suds in the cups?” softly cried the one of the yellow locks. “Look, Phebe!”

“Phebe sees nothin’,” drawled the brown-cheeked sister, casting her heavy-lashed eyes lazily over her shoulder at Phebe, who stood with an idle hand lingering in the mouth of her bag, musing absently, and with a grieved look. She roused herself and moved on in pursuit of a fair lock, which the breeze was chasing into the embrace of a wild rosebush. But a red-visaged Indian woman secured it.

Phebe Newbegin was Phebe Nichols’s first-born daughter, — all her own. The forces of life had apparently repelled the Newbegin strain in selecting the materials of her being, and the second Phebe was not only her mother in physical lineaments, but the distilled result of her mother’s mental distractions. Much tender consideration and reverence are given to a mother because of what she suffers in bearing her child. Is the child sufficiently revered who painfully and patiently bears its mother in brain and blood through a lifetime?

Out of the maternal mixture the second Phebe had evolved, however, some distinct qualities, peculiarly her own. We know that the very desola-

tion and seeming deadness out of which they draw life react in the full veins of April and in the tender heart of May ; that the green branch has reachings, like longings, which take energy from a deeply hidden spring in the mother stem, which, after all, was not dead ; that spring leaps suddenly into full glow when it is mothered by a long, hard winter. That is what the weather-wise say, — that one extreme follows another, — and Phebe Nichols, during the first years of her married life, was in the deadness of a hard, blighting winter, out of which had sprung a daughter with passionate longings. Anne and Mary were daughters, but Phebe was her mother's own soul. Phebe and her little Phebe drew together in constant companionship, and in the absence of it the girl withdrew, choosing solitude, or perhaps without choice falling into solitude, as every soul does when not of its surroundings. So she wandered apart from her sisters, who likewise were iron and magnet to each other. While they exchanged their small impressions, Phebe spoke whisperingly, as if to her mother.

“ So many folks, an' not one of 'em likes us. If it was n't for gettin' the wool for thee, mother, I could n't have hed a mind to come. Anne an' Mary wants the goodies, but in a minute they 'd be

eet an' gone. Mother, mother, I do' know what 't is I lack! I ain't hungry, never; nor thirsty, — scurcely ever; an' yet it seems, too, as if I was."

She pushed back her sunbonnet, exposing her yearning face and the sweet, gentle outlines of her head, and looked again, wistfully, sorrowfully, with quivering lip, over the busy, indifferent throng. "They don't like us!" she said again. "*That's* what I want, mother, — to be liked; to be *liked*, — more and more — and *more!*"

The day waxes warm. Selectmen, as red and moist as the most ordinary citizen, mop their faces with bright-colored handkerchiefs, and small boys keep what little remains of their diminished costumes by the sole tenure of their "galluses." The women and girls are bareheaded, and the men in their shirt-sleeves. Here and there the face of an Indian, busy and faithful at work, shines like a wet copper vessel. There is a perpetual demand for beverages, yet the lemon-flavored water and the bottles of small beer do not give out.

Beneath the tents the women are spreading the tables with snow-white homespun linen, upon which room is demanded for "huge mountains of toast; broiled slices of unequaled salmon, caught by the Indians, and brought from the wild regions of the Penobscot; cutlets of veal, slices of mutton-

ham broiled and peppered in dark spots and garnished with cloves ; beefsteak swimming in butter ; the finest flavored fish, an hour before sporting in the sea ; delicious clams and pooquaws, or quahaugs ; the freshest produce of the domestic dairy in all its variety of rose-impregnated butter yielded by the tender herbage of June ; pot-cheese, curds and cream, and venerable cheese which in far lands would pass for Parmesan ; pies of dried fruit, custards, and cranberry tarts, pound cakes, and puddings of bread, rice, and Indian meal, enriched with eggs ; pickles of cucumbers, beans, beets, and onions ; rare teas, foreign wine of generous vintage, seldom used by these people of simple habits, and home-made fermentations." All these, piled upon pewter platters or flowing from inexhaustible teapots and flagons, promise feasting and cheer as long as there is a wish or an appetite left.

Under one tent these preparations are made by a negro woman and man, and there is something more of fineness and luxury in the furnishings which they deftly set in array. There is a basket of champagne, and there are small boxes labeled in Spanish as from Habana.

One by one the shearers leave their work, bathe their warm faces, pull down their shirt-sleeves,

brush off the fuzz, and look complacently back over the result of the morning's work. The great snowy masses that creep lazily over the heavens are matched on the earth beneath. The heavenly fleeces cover the sun, and then, like a glow of pleasure overspreading and beautifying a plain, sweet face, the humble landscape shines again, without a shade of color that is not soft and quiet, unless, perhaps, a dash made by a smart gown or a kerchief.

The dishes had just begun to move and clink merrily. Engrossing as were their contents, roving eyes directly espied a rival interest in the approach of a little belated train of carioles and calashes led — unmistakably this time — by Richard Macy's gray horse. On the warm, still air floated the sonorous sounds of men's voices, and the laugh of a musically piped, masculine young throat. From the foremost vehicle, as it drew near, looked out a pair of dark, keen, all-searching eyes, that seemed brimming with universal good will.

Like a new comet shooting into calm space, Captain Dudley in his shore clothes, that he had worn in his father's house in Boston, sprang from the high green calash that rocked and creaked vigorously in delivery. Flashing good-natured

smiles into the staring faces that looked out from under tents and awnings, and from the shelter of upturned carts, he was escorted to the tent where the black couple stood in glossy whiteness of attire to attend upon the wishes of the hospitable owners of the Susan Starbuck and their guests, and seated in the place of honor.

Never in all their lives had contiguous Nantucketers heard so much chatting and laughter as were condensed into the following hour; and by and by there was a song, quick and sweet, like the tripping of pretty feet in a dance, and little monologues in a clear, vibrant voice, interrupted by incontinent laughter, — plenty of laughter. That of the staid shipowners appeared unaccustomed and rusty by comparison with the young captain's silver-bugle notes, and that of admiring younger men was a veritable claque of applause.

The pretty maids who had watched toward the town could not well eat their dinners, and, when the matter of dinner was dismissed, fluttered about like some abnormal species of moth, that fled from the candle with expectation that it would be attracted to them. What a confusion of sensations among them! What a retouching of smooth-enough locks and retying of quite-correct ribbons, when Captain Dudley, coming out of the festal

tent, said, loud enough to be heard on all sides, "No, no, thank you. Good heavens, no. We must go and see the pretty lasses."

His fashion of dress was of the easy order, scorning stiffness and stocks. His handsome supple legs were well defined by smooth black stockings and tight fawn-colored breeches. His wavy brown hair was cut short, and guiltless of powder. The short-tailed coat was plum-color, with brass buttons, over a vest of flowered satin. A large collar turned over in points upon a loose cravat, displaying the superb brown column of his throat, with its capital of virile beauty. He was a gay landsman until, with the joy of a hunter after large game, he stepped upon the deck of his ship; and he dazzled the Nantucketers, but many a look of grave disapproval melted under his sunny eyes. He singed the wings of the moths right and left, as he moved across the shearing-ground, casting a sweet glance at this one, a smile and an enamored look at that one, offering much-prized words here, and almost a kiss there; never pausing long until he and his comrades were quite on the outskirts of the thronged commons, where, in some freak born of champagne, he caught a browsing horse by its mane, leaped into the bare hollow of its back, and bounded away, round and round, leaving and

returning to his companions at the will of the animal.

“Is this a farewell?” shouted one of the attendant suite.

“Not at all; it’s an example I invite you to follow. Ha, ha, ha! Tra, la, la, tra, la, la, tra, la, la, la!”

These clarion notes startled the unaccustomed mare into a mad, unpremeditated career, up and over some low hillocks overgrown with field moss.

“Tra, la, la, tra, la, la, tra, la, la, la, la!” The reckless sounds came floating back, softened by distance into tones of tenderness.

He was indeed a wild fellow, in all the turbulence of the youthful, confused scramble after some kind of satisfaction. But out of his nebulous potentialities one star, baleful or beneficent, distinctly shone. It had for its nucleus an earnest wish to adore something. There were the possibilities of a love that makes heroes, and probabilities of quite another sort. He longed towards some lily-pure maid, and gravitated in an opposite direction. Some Moslem devotee killed a son of the prophet in order to worship at his tomb. With equal fanaticism, Captain Dudley had worshiped, but he reversed the order: he worshiped first, and then — the tomb.

The surprised mare, seeing that she was not put to any peril or force, ceased her confused canter, and resumed her quiet grazing and wandering, with apparent indifference to her strange burden. There was a scent of pine and sweet fern and bayberry that filled the air with a dreamy sweetness, and to-morrow the captain would part with the land.

“Everything is sweetest just before we’ve done with it,” he said, and, humming his love-song again, he let his eyes linger upon the soft homely scene in giving it adieu. There was a glint of something golden in the white azalea, a stone’s throw beyond. The captain examined it with interest, and then forsaking the old horse, with quick step and quickening pulse, as though he had been another Jason, he strode eagerly towards the alluring prospect of a golden fleece. Directly he could see the girlish figure of somebody industriously gathering tag-locks where the sheep had been dragged to the washing. He approached it by the shortest route. Throwing her head back at sound of the strange, rapid step, a blooming girl confronted him, buxom and common, but pretty; her face lightly sprinkled with freckles, and aureoled by bright, tumbled hair. Her warm lips pouted defiantly, for the most timid creatures assume that

aspect when brought to bay. After a long stare of amazement at the magnificent stranger, the wild thing poised herself for flight.

"Oh, don't go! Look, you've dropped something," the captain called to her, gathering up her bag, well stuffed with wool.

This store of riches, to be sure, she could not leave behind, and she reached far over to grasp it. The captain laughed at this triumph of cupidity over coyness, and in offering the bag caught the outstretched hand in a tractive, coaxing grasp.

"There; see how harmless I am. *Don't* fear! What are you doing out here, and alone?"

"Mary's yonder, an' Phebe. Lemme go!"

"Oh, but who are you?"

"I'm Anne. Lemme go!"

"No, no; you don't want to go. Do you? Ah, when I'm far away, in dull weather, I shall think of Anne's yellow locks bobbing about in the Nantucket sunshine, and remember how kind she was to me, I hope."

The girl, fascinated, hypnotized into quiet, like a charmed bird, never ceased to fix upon him her wondering, unwinking stare.

"Where's thee goin'?" she muttered.

"Oh, beating about after whales, round the other side of Cape Horn. Give me something to take with me!"

"I hain't nothin' to give."

"You stingy little thing! Well, then, I've something to give you, in saying farewell, — something to remember me by."

The tractive hand no longer coaxed; it compelled. The high, willful chin drew close. Something strange, terrible, and sweet descended upon Anne's outraged lips, and then, after a pretty stream of foolish, hushing babble, it was gone — *gone!*

The captain moved on deeper into the hollows, and nearer the margin of the pond, snatching a sprig of some balmy shrub, crushing and smelling it as he went.

"Two more somewhere," he murmured. "Let's see — Phebe! Mary! Phebe, Phebe!"

Directly out of the earth, as it seemed, a brown nymph, with languorous, heavy-lashed eyes and a full, sensuous under lip, arose, evidently from sleep, and looked at him narrowly, immovably.

"Is that you, Mary, or is it Phebe?"

A sullen stare was the only response.

"Ah, I see; it's Mary, she's so contrary. But where's Phebe?"

"What's thee want?" drawled the lazy little animal.

"I want *you*, Mary," said the captain decidedly.

“Then what’d thee call Phebe for?”

“Oh, never mind Phebe; come and tell me if you’re glad to see me.”

He did not wait, but moved over to where she stood bound to the earth by rustic curiosity that swallowed up even shyness. With a certain amenity of grace and gentleness in his impudence, he made her even more securely bound, pushed back her sunbonnet, lifted the only half-shrinking chin, and gazed into the long, narrow, smouldering eyes with his mesmeric smile, until the girl shuddered, but without a struggle, under the spell.

“Tell me, are you glad I’ve come? *Tell me!*”

There was a faint, inarticulate, involuntary sound, like the sob of a pacified baby. Then the lightning fell, and a second victim stood alone and overwhelmed by that strange, terrible sweetness that was *gone!*

“Too passive by half,” the captain grumbled, trampling the furze and crushing deeply into the yielding field moss. “A bird in the bush is worth two in the hand. Now where’s the Phebe bird?”

He stood upon a knoll and carelessly swept the region round about, whistling the tender notes of the phebe-bird.

Not at once, but after searching had begun to seem tedious, and impatience or indifference to set

in, there came slowly out of a thicket of alders on the margin of the pond, unconscious of his presence or his call, a gentle girl, bringing in her arms a stray lamb. Her bare head was bent over her burden. She spoke to it, comforting it. It seemed long before she lifted her face, and then a fresh delight flooded the captain's senses. It was another order of face than those he had gazed into so boldly. The chaste mouth was not one to be kissed in any mockery of love. She might have been St. Agnes, or the genius of that wild, simple place. Not a creature for conquest, but in her surroundings she had the loveliness of harmony. The reckless youth felt a new and strange sensation as he looked into the startled gazelle eyes. He did not dare. Nothing draws a man like that which calls him to dare and to adore. The unexpected purity which forbade him was more exquisite than the beauty which allured. All the young man's sudden transport and his homage were in the look which fell upon Phebe. Alas for Phebe! she drank the unknown draught poured out to her. She had never heard of love as between man and woman. How should she? Where could she? That half-agony of tenderness which her mother bestowed upon her was to her the only known type of love. She recalled wild, whispered demands, when she

was a little child, that she should love her mother, love her more — *more!* There was little association of joy with that abstraction named love. What she felt, as she stood drinking the costly wine of that worshipful look, was something of the torture out of which her mother's whispered words had come, a sharp pang, and a wish that the pang might never cease.

Unconsciously, as much without volition as the strings of a guitar vibrate a corresponding tone to the note that is sung upon them, Phebe timidly returned the wondering, worshiping gaze. The pang mixed with it gave to her look a pathetic intensity, which pierced the captain in the old romantic way, as with a shower of arrows. He moved towards her with something of the manner of a penitent sinner approaching the shrine of his saint.

“Are you Phebe?” he gently inquired. “I’m glad of that. How did I know? I ought to have known long ago, Phebe. I was afraid it was some angel. I hoped it was n’t.” As he rambled on, he patted the ugly lambkin — chiefly a collection of legs — very near the spot where Phebe’s hand lay. “What a happy little beast!” he added vapidly.

“No, he ain’t happy; he’s lost his mother.”

“I should be happy, if you showed kindness to

me," said Captain Dudley, "no matter what I'd lost."

Phebe looked up, doubt-stricken, at these incredible words, and slowly surveying that impersonation of prosperity. "Thee ain't in need," she said tremulously.

Coquettish-sounding words, but Phebe's grave simplicity would have put coquetry to utter shame. There was no smile on her tender lips, and her limpid eyes were sad.

"I *am* in need! I am, I *am*!" cried the captain, with low-toned vehemence; and the hand which feigned caresses to the lamb made a broader sweep, and settled with brooding, passionate firmness upon Phebe's little brown fingers, while the face bent down to her sent that sweet pang shooting into the core of her life again and again, it was so imploring and so splendid. "I wander forever on the lonely sea, Phebe." The sound of these phrases was touching to the captain's volatile feelings. "And when I'm upon land," he continued, "I'm a reckless, wretched fellow. I *do* need such kindness, such goodness, such angelic sweetness. I do, I *do*!"

Phebe's reason rocked on its simple foundations.

"Ah! Phebe, Phebe" —

It is uncertain how this apostrophe would have

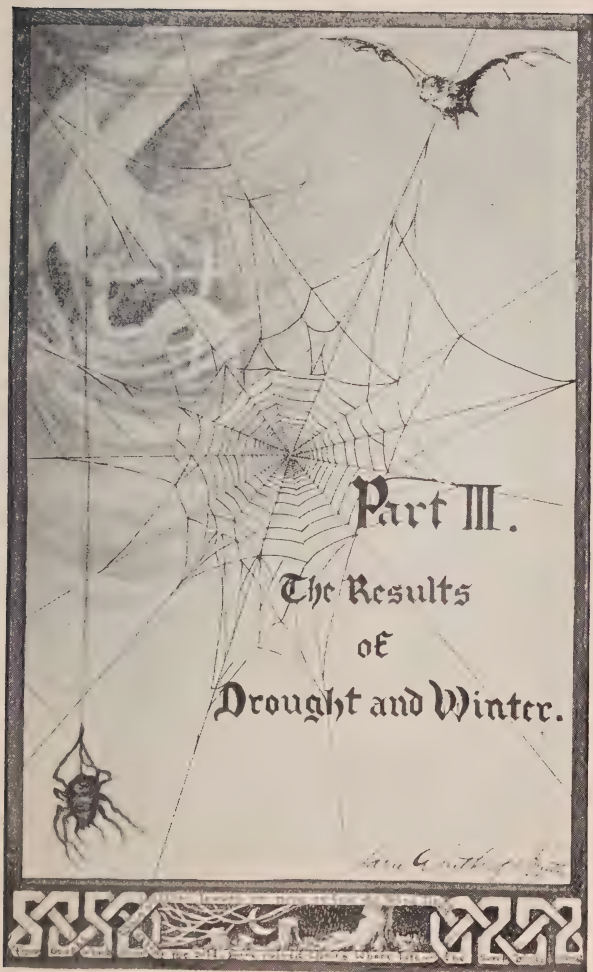
concluded ; it was interrupted by the thud, thud, of horse's hoofs on the plain. Richard Macy was cantering down in anxious search of the lost guest, whom the return of the discarded mare had reported as left on the field.

With a sailor's abandon, with one of his own impulses, Captain Dudley seized the lamb, flung it bleating upon the sand, and in the excitement of haste, his face intense with the passion of the last sweet, romantic moment, clasped Phebe in his arms.

"Bless your little heart, *bless* you !" he whispered, and she felt his warm breathing. "Think of me ; watch for me ; *don't* forget me !"

He snatched a little silver ship that pinned his ruffled bosom, fastened Phebe's kerchief with it, and then turned to meet Richard Macy. In another instant he had mounted and was gone.

Pale, throbbing, her chest heaving, Phebe sank down beside the forsaken lamb.



Part III.

The Results
of
Drought and Winter.

Lara G. Withington

III.

THE RESULT OF DROUGHT AND WINTER.

AT half past four o'clock, one morning of May, the watchman in the tower of the Unitarian Church at Nantucket blew resounding blasts from his horn. Soon the walks on many housetops were alive with animated figures and groups in unfinished costumes. Sunrise gave them a nimbus fit for ascending saints. To some, the joy of the moment seemed also fitting to a transcending climax.

The long-expected Susan Starbuck was in sight. Her sails swelled like proud breasts with her native air, and flushed carmine as if with consciousness of the hearts she was thrilling. The Susan Starbuck, having crossed and recrossed every approachable latitude, and sailed upon nearly every sea of the earth, was bringing four years' results to lay them upon the lap of Nantucket. Night-capped heads looked out. Quivering fingers made careful toilets. Children disdained their breakfasts in view of the luscious oranges that were floating towards them, and the sweet, milky cocoanuts that long-absent fathers would soon lay open for them.

Numerous small craft presently put out to meet and welcome the returning voyagers, and get early answers to the eager questions, "What luck? What cheer?"

The old captain was bringing his ship home for the last time. His gout was too troublesome to make seafaring practicable; but he pealed a round, stentorian message through his speaking-trumpet when within hailing distance: "Chuck full! All alive and well!"

A superb elderly figure he made, bronzed and massive, as he stood in the bow and waved a salute to the visitors coming alongside, uncovering a crown upon which the hair declined to grow. He welcomed his friends aboard; he did the final honors; and then, used as he was to leaving things behind, to seeing the last of them, he looked along and athwart the ship's deck, his abdicated kingdom, with misty eyes, and mouth firmly set to restrain its womanish trembling, before he put foot on the ladder and descended to the boat that was to take him ashore.

The Susan Starbuck was the one feminine to whom he had been true, the one creature whom he had loved without wavering. Even while he chatted and related incidents of his voyage, his thoughts wandered to the noble, slowly-bowing



creature anchored outside the bar, over which she must submit to be lifted by machinery called camels, and then, in spite of her dignity, to be towed into harbor. Her old master's eyes gravely caressed her until he had rounded Brant Point. In that time, as in dying moments, the years swept over Captain Dudley. In the surrender he was making, he seemed to die out of youth and prime into the cold other world of age. As he climbed to the wharf, with some difficulty of stiff and twinging joints, he said to himself that he was fifty-nine. The years that remained to be disposed of were a very sobering consideration. He was richer than his employers by inheritance and the accumulated gain of lucky voyages. The continent, the world, was before him, upon which to choose a convenient, comfortable, or luxurious abiding-place, and he might gather about him such friends as he would choose, at wide liberty and pleasure. To be sure, there were some things that he lacked, which age seemed to need: a hearthstone, sympathetic faces about it, dear memories and associations; for he had no family ties.

The rattling jar of transit over cobble-paved streets was troublesome to a forty years' traveler upon fluid roads. Forty years! Only eight voyages and their intervals! There seemed to him a sudden shrinking of perspective.

When he had deposited his papers, Captain Dudley was ready for the late breakfast to which he was invited. It was at the bright, cosy morning table of a famous Nantucket housekeeper that he conceived the restful thought, "Why not stay where I am, in Nantucket?" On land he was everywhere a stranger. At Nantucket the familiar sea would surround him, and he could lie at anchor or sail out at his will. It soothed the homesick feeling that oppressed him at thought of being forever landed. With his remainder of impulse, he began to arrange his own Nantucket breakfast-table, and garnish it with the vision of some smiling face. His affections had been a good deal pulled upon, but still preserved a degree of elasticity. They had not reached that disastrous crisis of wear and tear which, in old metals, is called "fatigue."

With the proverbial restlessness of the sailor upon land, and under the impossibility of smoking his cigar in the immaculate, untainted house of his hostess, he went out after breakfast to try how his sea legs would serve him upon the steadfast earth. He lighted his cigar, and sauntered up Main Street, with his feet wide apart, rolling this way and that, as the earth seemed to lurch under him. On either side, the kindly, homely face of Nantucket invited him again to consider

the plan of making permanent port of the island. Wander he must, now and again, but return he must, too, to some refuge strong of the salt and the tar and the oil, when fresh water and dry land became odious to him.

Then, as always, Nantucket set no claim upon luxury or elegance. It had no foolish notions of prettiness, made no luckless excursions after supposititious beauty; but its strong character was everywhere visible in a severe reserve, favorable to the prudent and the useful. Accustomed to the limitation and exactness of his own cabin, the captain liked this definite precision, varying in expression from the more opulent stiffness of the homes in which the oil merchants had serenely sheltered themselves, to the unqualified baldness of conveniences for the lesser people to live in, with their needful little windows and doors, flights of steps that either opened a passage up one side, over a landing, and down the other side, or else sternly compelled you to return as you came up. There was seldom room for a direct frontal mount, they stood so close upon the street. Here and there somebody had coaxed an abortive shade tree; but for the greater part, this court end of the town was unshaded, cobbled, flagged, simple, severe, exquisitely clean, and crooked, like every other part.

The captain, with the comfortable supposition that he had settled upon an abiding place, began to look about for the exact site of his proposed home, and to study the faces of the townsfolk, who, thinking that he must be the lucky captain of the Susan Starbuck, stared at him as if he had been some strange beast. He recalled his *al fresco* meeting with some of them before he was old. Vague recollections and vivid rushed upon him. He smiled; he breathed "Heigh-ho!" Since that far-away shearing-day, he had barely landed on the island, and taken the first boat off; or, having sent home his oil of late years, he had not landed here at all.

He felt disposed to exchange glances with some pretty women and girls whom he encountered. He ogled them in a wistful, tentative way. "They don't look at me as they used to," he said, blowing the smoke of his cigar with a long, slow puff that ended in a sigh.

He had sauntered on towards the Friends' burying-ground beyond the limit of sidewalks, and was about to turn and retrace his steps, when he was arrested by the appearance of an extraordinary human figure on the lonely scene that opened out beyond: a gaunt woman, with harsh sandy hair and sunburnt face framed in a Quaker bonnet.

She bore down the road with a spanking tramp and a lumbering energy, her arms pendulous, her eyes drooped and steadfastly fixed upon the path before her, or upon some foreseen goal.

“Good heavens! Who would have expected to see such a sight as that on Nantucket?” said the captain; for as he looked, this homely Quakeress rolled athwart the way, from side to side, like a person basely intoxicated. Yet, after all, no; it was unlike that, since her zigzag direction seemed strongly and regularly determined in the manner of an able craft moving against the wind. It was no wavering, uncontrolled helplessness, but a chosen course, evidently pursued with enjoyment. The captain’s wonder dilated when this human craft, as it was about to pass some marking-post beside the way, made a circuit of it three times, — round and round and round, — and then came tacking on again, until it reached a solitary pine stump, that had struggled up uninvited, and died unmolested, by the footpath. This she also circumnavigated three times, and in finishing came face to face with the captain.

“Why do you give yourself so many extra steps, good woman?” he asked.

She swept him a derisive smile that showed the broken ranks of her teeth.

“Does thee expect a ship to go beatin’ round Cape Horn as if ’t was only a boat sailin’ up the harbor?” she asked. And the captain would have replied, but the Anne Newbegin came suddenly round to the wind again, and sailed off on her sturdy course.

The captain, smiling, watched her, as something foreign to his ken, and then went slowly rolling after, like an imperfect instance of the same species. He dined with Mr. Macy Starbuck that day. That gentleman, glowing with his own satisfaction in the most remarkable last voyage of the captain, subdued by regret that there were no more such captains to be had for the asking, and Mrs. Starbuck, reflecting her husband’s mien, and radiating her own essential cheerfulness, repeated themselves in still brighter tones, on either hand, by way of a fine, strapping taciturn son, and a pretty, loquacious daughter. The captain looked about him with the complacent satisfaction of a fellow citizen. Everything was “ship-shape,” he said to himself, — just as he might have it; yes, even to the son and daughter, peradventure. His audacity was not dead. He began to have a confident manner and tone. Mrs. Starbuck — an expansive, sweet-faced woman in a brown alpaca gown, with a lace collar pinned by a large topaz

breastpin, which looked like a little window through which streamed her stored-up sunshine — looked warm and rosy, as if she had come from a fiery region. This promised a pudding unattainable to the outside world, the secret of which was sacredly held by Nantucket housekeepers, and never trusted to cooks.

“One fault of a Nantucket dinner, for a man who has been four years at sea, is that it *must* have a flavor of the sea,” she said, when the lobster soup was disappearing. “Even the things that grow on our land seem to absorb a taste of it.”

“To please me, a thing must come either from Nantucket or from the sea,” Captain Dudley responded gallantly. “I found I had a little sentiment in connection with Nantucket, tucked away somewhere and forgotten.”

“Such things ought not to be allowed to get musty,” said Mrs. Starbuck. “Ought n’t you to bring it out and air it a little?”

“A — well” — the captain hesitated, “there’s no danger of its getting musty. It’s preserved in a general fondness for the island.”

Mr. Starbuck, smooth-haired, smooth-faced, with large, prominent teeth and a smile that exposed them enormously, listened to these remarks with

his wonted disclosure, which expanded to a grand dental display as he called upon the captain to bring on his sentiment. "For here's a bit of the island itself," said he, "every atom extracted from the Nantucket soil." This bit of Nantucket was a roast of spring lamb, the product, not of the sunny plains, but of a sunny corner in Mr. Starbuck's own farm. Its tempting aroma mingled with the sweet pungency of mint.

"My affection for Nantucket is growing," said Captain Dudley, beaming upon the roast. "Give us our lamb with mint, and not sentiment."

"No, no; let's have them all together, captain," pleaded Mrs. Starbuck.

The young man and the maiden looked at the weather-beaten seaman with their vainglory of youth discreetly suppressed. They gleefully hoped the old salt would melt into sentiment. Incongruity in age is one of the standard jokes of youth.

"Well," said the captain pensively, as though he felt their slight unconscious disdain, "I'm an old fellow. I can't blush with any kind of grace, but upon my word, I was remarkably young once, and your grandfather" (to the young people) "took me out, one shearing-day, to dine on the commons. It was then and there that I packed away in spices a very romantic moment.

I found somewhere, down by the margin of a pond, the sweetest pattern of a girl, to my fancy, that I ever set my young eyes upon. My *young* eyes, understand," with a glance of apology at the girl beside him. "I thought about her for a year, — yes, rather more than a year."

"Oh, who was she? Where is she?" asked little Miss Starbuck, graciously accepting the tradition of the captain's youth.

"I don't know."

"Don't know who she was?"

"Did n't think to ask her, and the next morning I sailed out to pass a few years on the Pacific Ocean."

"And you have n't seen her since?"

"No."

"Did n't you try to, when you came back?"

"No."

"Dear me! Why not?"

"O-ho! I can't undertake to tell my whole history."

"Maybe she's here now. Oh, do try to find her! We'll help you."

"Very well. Shall we start out after dinner, you and I, and make a beginning? You could take one side of a street, and I the other, and ask at each door if Phebe is there."

"Phebe? Was her name Phebe?"

"It was."

"Then there's a clue! We *will* find her!"

"But you see, my child, if she's alive, she won't be that enchanting wild lily whose innocence I adored. She's somebody's grandmother by this time."

Miss Starbuck's enthusiasm fell forty degrees. In her pursuit of the romantic, she seemed to come unexpectedly against a blank wall.

"Oh, maybe not," she said, however, "there are such a lot of women here who never married. Can't you think of any who are named Phebe, mother?"

"Plenty," said Mrs. Starbuck, with readiness; "but I don't advise Captain Dudley to look for his wild lily among the middle-aged unmarried women of Nantucket. I can't think of one that he'd be likely to adore to-day. There are some interesting characters among them, but they do get to be so very eccentric."

"I must have met one of them, then, this morning," said the captain. "Ha, ha, ha! Eccentric! I vow, that's the word. She came beating down the road, starboard and port, like a close-hauled lugger against the wind, and rounded every stick and stone that came in her course."

A smile went round the board.

“It was Anne!”

“Oh, Anne Newbegin!”

“Poor Anne!”

These ejaculations fell here and there, and Mr. Starbuck explained with a smile of medium range: “One of three sisters who live out beyond the Friends’ burying-ground. Singular creatures. Perhaps you’d like to pay them a visit; almost everybody does. We have n’t much to offer. They are our curiosities.”

“Thank you. Do they all tack and circumnavigate? What a spectacle when they walk out together!”

“Two of them never walk out at all,” said Mrs. Starbuck, “or not beyond their own bounds. They have n’t been seen in town for nearly forty years. To them it is the vast outside world. They know only from hearsay of its changes, — of the remarkable buildings that have risen, and the many that were swept away by the great fire. Even the wonder of a boat that goes by steam did not bring them, as we thought it would. Anne does the walking and the talking, while the others sit silently at home, one staring out of a window that looks towards the town, and the other gazing into the fire, always with their backs turned to each other. Some people find them interesting.”

“And droll,” said Miss Starbuck, while a mischievous twinkle in young Starbuck’s eye seemed reminiscent of funny things.

“They say that Mary has sat so long by the fire that one side of her is baked hard and brown,” said he. “We all want to know what they’ve been thinking about for thirty or forty years.”

“And watching for,” added his sister. “We build hopes upon the winning and finding-out powers of every new person we take to visit them. So far, all have failed. The Newbegins are as much a mystery to-day as they ever were; but to-morrow we’re going to take you out, captain.”

The captain shook his head at Miss Starbuck’s smiling challenge, and declared that they could not take a man who would feel more abashed before three such remarkable ladies.

The next morning, a solemn black boy — the blackest boy north of the equator — came round to Captain Dudley’s lodgings with Mr. Starbuck’s carryall and heavy, well-kept horse, to take him up for a turn around the island. Then, putting about for Mrs. Starbuck and her daughter to come aboard, as the captain expressed it, he appealed for the privilege of doing the navigating himself. Tom was put ashore, and the remaining

trio set out in a southerly direction, down Orange Street, and past the town farm, in the direction of the shearing-grounds. On either side of the way, flocks of sheep and their lambs, enjoying their spring elysium, gave peaceful life to the bland stretches of the commons; and patches of houstonia, purple and white violets, and yellow rock-roses among the poverty grass represented the exuberance of the soil. The night's fog rolled away over the sea in white columns, and the uncovered sky seemed to soar. The moist air was full of the sweetness of spring. A farmhouse far out, and one 'Sconset fisherman whom they met creeping across the plain in his cart, were the only suggestions of human life; but the tips of the pines had pushed out their pink buds, and among them a song sparrow gushed into ravishing jets of tune. It was almost June. The old captain felt young Captain Dudley alive under disguise of the portly figure and bald head in which he was masquerading. The wishes of his youth returned upon him, like a tide past its ebb, as the simple scene opened exactly as it had years ago, and he smelled again odors of sweet things he had plucked and cast away as he went.

By that sure and swift evocation that is in the power of remembered odors, a blooming yellow-

haired damsel appeared behind the thicket of young oak, a lazy, brown-eyed nymph among the azalea; tender sweet fern and bayberry and shoots of pine crushing under the wheels united with all other subtleties of the air to bring back the little sad-eyed Quakeress and her words, "Thee ain't in need." Again the captain cried out, almost audibly, "I am! I am!" and then coughing to cover the sound which he fancied had escaped his lips, he asked which way he should steer.

"To the right; we want to go round by the Newbegins', you know," said Miss Starbuck.

Mrs. and Miss Starbuck's kind offers of conversation came short of their reward. The heavy wheels ploughed the sands, and the respectable vehicle rose and fell with the undulations of the island. The road seemed to have no destination. It got quite away from everything except the scant and scathed vegetation of a moorish face of country, and then presented the surprise of a weather-worn old house, with a rain-water barrel at one corner, and windows that needed the water very much indeed; behind this, a tottering barn or shed, with pigeon holes in its gable, and a few pigeons sunning themselves on its caving roof. Through wide gaps could be seen the remnants of a two-wheeled cart, gone to pieces like its owner,



who lay below in the Friends' burying-ground, divided at last, by the intervening graves which filled out his row, from Phebe Nichols, to whom the earthly chances had married him.

In the doorway of the old house, Anne Newbegin was reasoning with a brown hen that stood in the sandy path and listened with averted head cocked aside, which gave it a very unpersuaded air. At the approach of visitors Anne caught up the stubborn fowl, and set it on the stairs behind her. "Thee go lay thy aig where thee'd oughter, Abig'il," she said. "Shoo! Shoo! *I* know th' plans;" and talk, talk, talking in a high, vixenish voice the hen ruffled herself, hopped up, and disappeared in the room above, while Anne turned to nod and chuckle at Mrs. Starbuck and her large basket, which the sociable stranger of her yesterday's encounter was about to set within the door.

She acknowledged both basket and bearer with appreciative grins, and cordially invited the three visitors to "come in and set down." This she made possible by banishing a bucket of hen's food, a pan of potatoes, and other contingencies to the sinkroom and bedroom.

The receiving apartment was indescribable in the variety of its appointments. From nails on

the walls hung old garments and sunbonnets, interspersed with iron and wooden utensils. Overhead was strung a combination of cobwebs, dried herbs, strings of peppers, onions, and ears of yellow corn. The high chimney-piece was a museum of the miscellaneous things that three queer old dames would set up out of the way : a dead chicken, an old shoe, a yellow pitcher without a handle, a brown earthen teapot without a spout, some whale-oil lamps in the condition of the foolish virgins', and a tallow dip decorated with its own congealed drippings, were among the most evident. A black cat sat considering on a window-sill. From a basket on the table came the shrill peep of a resuscitated sick chicken, brooded by the fragments of an old quilted petticoat. There were continual pattering and clucking sounds overhead.

A woman in the chimney-corner and one by the window roused themselves from their musings. The captain, with a feeling of repression and repulsion, saluted them across the room, seated himself in a fiddle-back chair near the door, and gave mute attention to the curious scene, while Mrs. Starbuck and her daughter chatted kindly to the three sisters in turn. Their prim Quaker caps and kerchiefs gave them an effect of neatness that

was absent from their surroundings. The sallow one in the chimney-corner, with heavy under lip and drowsy eyes, answered only in gruff monosyllables, and turned a look upon the captain now and then, that seemed to him unpleasant. But he felt something pull at that corner of his heart where compassion lay, as he looked upon the slight form at the window. Her sunken eyes unaccountably disturbed him. Her absent responses had a tone of pathetic patience.

Anne, for her part, with undivided interest, sat upon something like a hencoop, and frankly scrutinized the hushed stranger, who grasped his hat with one hand, while with the other he slowly combed the beard that covered half his face, and wondered why he had brought up at this strange anchorage. The three pairs of eyes that either stealthily or steadily examined him had each their own way of making him feel that there was something uncanny in the moment. He remembered that the Fates were three; and the deuce! there was a spindle in the corner, and a pair of shears hanging against the wall!

Anne, always uneasy, got up presently, and pottered about the room, advancing little by little upon the captain's position with a bewildered, dubious air.

"Has thee ever been here before?" she asked suddenly, from close behind his chair.

The captain started.

"No, never," he said, with decision.

"Wal — I do' know."

The poor soul tucked a lock of her thin blonde hair under her cap border, and stood with her hands clasped resignedly, and her eyes fixed upon a crack in the floor, while she struggled to lay hold of some elusive thread of association, some vague shadow that touched her dull perceptions. What was it? Whence came it? The woman by the window started and sighed, and the one in the chimney-corner repeated her contemptuous stare. To each of those wastes of womanhood was borne a sense of something troublous, tumultuous, and long-ago. They were far from referring it to that heavy, elderly man with a thick voice.

"Where be thee from?" persisted Anne, to whom Nantucket was the world, and all beyond it as inconceivable as the unseen world of faith to human speculation.

"From round the other side of Cape Horn," the captain answered largely.

A flash of excitement lighted the woman's faded eyes. A mottled flush stained her cheek. She swept a glance over her shoulder at her sisters (who

were seemingly listening to Miss Starbuck's lively account of things in town, told as one would tell wonder-tales to children), and then whispered, "Hev there been much dull weather round there?"

"I dare say. Why?"

Anne drew still nearer, with a peculiar flux of confidence, as she whispered the first divulgement of her secret into the ear that shrank from her breathings. "When it's dull weather, somebody's a-thinkin' 'bout me."

The captain, as yet unaware of the irony of the gods, or of Anne's unconscious mockery, responded: —

"Ah, I see; you're one of the host of women who have sent their hearts round Cape Horn."

"'Sh!" hissed Anne, glancing over her shoulder again at those long-ago partakers with her in some stray crumbs of love. "*They* think *they*'re the ones."

This lowed-toned conversation was indeed a matter of disturbance to the more reticent ones of the triad. The contemptuous look hitherto bestowed upon the captain, in his generic aspect of man, now included Anne, and even the watcher at the window roused herself, and seemed to reproach her sister with her hollow eyes. Anne, evidently good-natured and a lover of concord, quickly left

her machinations to attend to more obvious and innocent matters. At some curious, low diverberation of sound, she turned to an ancient oak bureau which seemed to be its source, and opened one of its drawers.

“Hannah’s laid!” she announced with smiling satisfaction; and Hannah herself lifted a speckled, electrified neck, and uttered the same proclamation in her own language. Directly from overhead came an answering volley of “cut-cut-cut-ah-cut,” until the whole house resounded with a chorus of triumphant, respondent hens, penetrated by the solo of a sympathetic cock. Hannah descended from her official bureau, and continued to laud and magnify herself. Under cover of the racket, Miss Starbuck reached towards the captain, with a merry twinkle in her eye, and said, “You don’t recognize the one by the window?”

“Recognize her?” The noise and the question were confounding.

“Her name is Phebe.”

Miss Starbuck blushed then, with the afterthought that this would seem a poor joke to the captain. He made no response. His face was stern; and could it be an expression of dread and horror that she saw gathering in the eyes he fixed upon the withered old lily at the window, now re-

lapsed into abstracted contemplation? Things of the present had little power to hold her. Again she sighed and moved a little. Her thick blue-gray hair lay smoothly over the small hollows in her temples, and brought the sad, darkly marked eyes into vivid distinctness. Her pale mouth, the dead body of tender passion, that had died not in hard struggles, but in long, slow, wasting sickness, had little galvanic tremors. A homely woman, prematurely old; a mere curiosity to her kind.

But there came and stood beside this wreck, in the captain's wrought-up fancy, the same figure retouched. He saw again the eyes that had drunk his own passion, more than thirty years ago; the innocent lips that had quivered under the gust of his momentary ardor. A little breeze from the window fluttered her cap-strings, now revealing, now concealing, a point of brightness on her bosom. The captain's bronzed face was ashen gray, as he leaned forward, put up his glasses, and discovered, deep in the folds of Phebe's kerchief, his little silver ship. It seemed to punctuate the story of his loves, — to stand for its final period.

The next day, the only person who understood the vagaries of the Newbegins surprised the owners of the Susan Starbuck by proposing to buy them out. What did he want of old Susan? He wanted

a home ; and he paid for it, put it into the dock at New Bedford for repairs, shipped his men, and sailed out to finish his days on the sea.

The symptoms of that tumult which their one taste of love had aroused in the minds of the New-begin sisters remained to the end, as the mere persistency of habit.

The Friends gave them a comfortable asylum in their old age ; but one by one they stole away by night, and went back to their home and their hens on the desolate plain ; and from thence, one by one, they too sailed out.

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